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THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 72/NO. 29 JULY 21, 2008

INSIDE

Flood cleanup workers fight job agency rip-off

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U.S., Pakistan widen war in Afghanistan border area

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON—A cease-fire between the main Taliban militia in Pakistan and the government broke down June 28 as Islamabad pressed a massive offensive against the al-Qaeda-backed group in the country's North-West Frontier Province near the Afghanistan border.

The Pakistani military also carried out coordinated attacks June 30 along its side of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border near Afghanistan's Khost province where U.S. and NATO forces were battling Islamist militias. Dozens of Taliban militia members were killed in the attacks, including 33 by U.S.-led helicopters and bombers, according to press reports.

The same day, NATO and the Pakistani military responded with coordinated artillery and rocket fire to a separate attack on a NATO outpost by Taliban-backed militia.

The actions draw Pakistan into the stepped-up combat tempo in the region resulting from increased U.S. military operations there.

Pakistan's top Taliban leader, Baitullah Mehsud, said his militia would suspend peace talks with the government because of the offensive. The Pakistani government has implicated Mehsud in the assassination of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto.

Pakistani troops took control of Peshawar, the North-West Frontier Province capital, on June 29 as Taliban forces massed near the city and a tribal area known as the Khyber Agency where another 400 paramilitary troops were deployed.

Mehsud has said his forces will continue to attack U.S.-led troops in Afghanistan despite the peace talks. The Pakistani military initiated the offensive to counter increasing threats to Peshawar and Taliban ambushes of supply convoys bound for U.S.-led coalition troops in Afghanistan, reported the Associated Press.

Pakistani Maj. Gen. Alam Khattak, head of the Frontier Corps, suggested this would not be the only operation against the militias. The Swat region may be next, other government officials said. The Pakistani military took big losses against the Taliban in Swat last year.

The stepped-up operations by the Pakistani military against the Islamist militia registers a shift by the Pakistani government. The new government, headed by the party of the slain former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, had been criticized by U.S. and NATO officials for negotiating peace agreements with Taliban-backed groups.

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30,000 in Chinese city protest gov't, police abuse

BY SETH GALINSKY

Some 30,000 people demonstrated in the town of Weng'an in southwestern China June 28 against the police and local government, charging a cover-up in the death of 17-year-old Li Shufen.

Some 160 offices including the police headquarters and 40 vehicles were torched in the course of the protest, sparked by allegations that the young woman had been raped and killed by three people with connections to local government and police officials. The police insist Li committed suicide, drowning after jumping into a river July 21.

The demonstration began June 28 when Li's family, followed by about 300 people including middle school students, marched with placards reading "Return justice to the people" and "Petition for the people."

According to one report, they were beaten when they arrived at the police offices. The action grew. By the time it was over seven hours later, 150 were injured, including more than 100 cops, according to Xinhua.

Weng'an is set in a valley of rice and vegetable fields in Guizhou province. It grew from a population of 27,000 in 1990 to 65,000 in 2000, the latest year figures are available. Guizhou is China's poorest province, which had a per capita gross domestic product of about $1,200 in 2001. For Shanghai, China's richest city, the figure was $15,000.

At a panel discussion in Guizhou July 2, Communist Party officials acknowledged that local authorities "had failed to solve disputes over mines, demolition of homes for city building, relocation of residents for reservoir construction, and reform of state-owned enterprises," Xinhua reported.

As the Chinese government pursues economic development using capitalist methods, land held collectively has been sold to private owners, new factories and dams have drastically altered the environment, and the gap between the countryside and the cities has widened. Many residents of Guizhou have joined the millions of rural Chinese who leave their homes in the countryside in search of work in towns and cities.

Workplace safety has severely deteriorated. In September 2000 a gas explosion at Muchonggou mine in Guizhou killed 162 miners.

The ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) moved quickly to try to restore stability by firing the police chief, the top CPC official, and the head of the local government of Weng'an for "severe malfeasance."

Joblessness rises for 6th month in a row

'Shorten workweek with no pay cut,' says socialist presidential candidate

Getty Images

Workers wait in line for a June 10 job fair in New York City

438,000 jobs are eliminated since January 2008

BY BEN JOYCE

The U.S. Department of Labor reports that a net total of 62,000 jobs were lost in June, the sixth consecutive month employment has declined.

The bosses have cut nearly 438,000 jobs since January. One of the heaviest-hit sections of the working class is in the construction industry. Construction jobs fell by 43,000 in June. Manufacturing jobs fell by 33,000. Mining jobs grew by 8,000; food services by 16,000. The largest number of new jobs came from local government.

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Calero calls for massive public works program

BY CINDY JAQUITH

"The millions of unemployed could be put to work at union-scale wages right now," said Róger Calero, the Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. president, in a July 6 interview. He said the SWP is campaigning for a massive, federally funded program to build affordable housing, schools, hospitals, roads, bridges, and public transportation.

"When elected, I will also initiate federal legislation to shorten the workweek, with no cut in take-home

Continued on page 3

Meat industry, Labor Dept. cover up injury rate on job

BY DOUG NELSON

Lack of safety on the job has sparked many workplace protests, and the meat industry is no exception. With line speeds accelerating in the employers' drive to raise profit rates, repetitive motion and other types of injuries are on the rise in slaughterhouses and packing plants across the country.

Yet, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, the annual injury and illness rate in meatpacking plants declined by 64 percent over the most recent 10 years of available statistics—from 30.3 per 100 workers in 1996 to 11.3 in 2006.

Throughout the 1980s the injury rate figures for meatpackers climbed. This was the time of an industry-wide assault by employers on the wages and working conditions of meatpackers, and on the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) union.

Between 1981 and 1991 occupational illness, primarily carpal tunnel syndrome, grew 442 percent.

Union protests against widespread disabling injuries in the industry resulted in a congressional investigation

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1,000 U.S. troops join military exercises in Peru

BY RÓGER CALERO

More than 1,000 troops from the U.S. Southern Command are taking part in June 1—August 31 military exercises and "humanitarian" missions in Peru.

Under New Horizons-Peru 2008, Continuing Promise, and other programs, troops from the U.S. Air Force, Army, and Navy will be used to provide medical, dental, and other services to the population, as well as build water wells, clinics, schools, and other buildings. The U.S. military uses these programs to familiarize its troops with and collect detailed knowledge of a region, as well as to give cover to military operations.

The military units will be deployed to Ayacucho—where production of coca leaf is concentrated and activity by remnants of the Maoist guerrilla group Shining Path continues—and two other locations along the coast.

The presence of the U.S. military has met opposition from political groups and trade unions who say the growing U.S. intervention is directed at workers' and peasants' protests.

"Why do we have to have U.S. troops come to open a few water wells, build a few classrooms and three clinics, if there are qualified Peruvian personnel who can do it?" asked Juana Huancahuari, a Nationalist Party congresswoman representing Ayacucho. "If they are coming in a humanitarian mission, why do they bring four Chinook combat helicopters?"

Peru's minister of defense Antero Flores defended the decision saying that only a small number of U.S. military personnel will be armed and that the rest are doctors and engineers.

In mid-June, U.S. Marines participated in a 10-day military training exercise along with their counterparts from Peru and Colombia in the Peruvian region of Inquito.

A group of organizations in Ayacucho called protests for July 8–9 to demand the withdrawal of the U.S. troops. The actions will coincide with other protests against the rising cost of living and government economic policies.

U.S. Navy/Omar A. Dominguez

USS *Forrest Sherman* in June 27 missile exercise off Peru's coast

'Blood money' appeal at $47,800

BY DAVE PRINCE

Contributions continue to grow to the appeal for members and supporters of the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists to donate their "Economic Stimulus" checks to the Capital Fund. Ninety contributors have now donated $47,800.

A member of the party in Des Moines, a meat packer, writes: "I received a $100 bonus from work. They told us it was to cover gas price increases. Recently they have been slaughtering more hogs per day than they ever have. This money should be put to use for the party."

A many-decades-long veteran cadre of the party in California sent $300 with a note saying it reflects "the amount of 'blood money' from the so-called 'stimulus payment.' It gives me great pleasure to put the money where it will do some good."

These contributions go to the Capital Fund, dedicated solely to long-term publishing projects over the next decade and beyond. Contributors to this special "Economic Stimulus" appeal are carrying forward a proud tradition of members of the communist movement contributing "blood money" contract-signing bonuses—employer bribes given in lieu of paying higher wages—and so-called safety and production bonuses used to shut us up when life and limb are at stake. The "Economic Stimulus" checks are more of the same "blood money."

This appeal complements that of the *Militant* to readers to contribute their checks to the socialist press (see box).

One contributor writes: "Please add the enclosed $300 to the party's Blood Money fund, Courtesy of the U.S. government. My mother qualified. As a beneficiary of her estate I'm delighted to be able to make appropriate use of it."

The government is still sending out the checks. Join the appeal!

Dave Prince is the director of the Economic Stimulus Capital Appeal.

Donate Economic Stimulus checks to the 'Militant'!

As unemployment climbs, inflation on basic necessities skyrockets, and utility cutoffs increase, the U.S. government is trying to bribe working people with tiny sums of money as part of its Economic Stimulus Act of 2008.

Class-conscious workers should reject this pittance for what it is: a ploy by the rulers to convince us that the government is doing something to alleviate the grind on our standard of living. We encourage readers to put this blood money to good use by contributing it to the socialist press.

❧

Send contributions to:
***The Militant* 306 W. 37th St.**
10th Floor New York, NY 10018.

New French Pathfinder titles sell well

BY DEREK JEFFERS

PARIS—Pathfinder supporters from France and Belgium made a special effort to visit bookstores in France to introduce three new French-language editions of Pathfinder titles—*Women's Liberation and the African Freedom Struggle* and *We Are the Heirs of the World's Revolutions*, both by Thomas Sankara, and *The First and Second Declarations of Havana*.

Of the 29 stores visited during May and June, 24 have placed orders thus far, for a total of 191 books and pamphlets. These include 48 copies of *L'émancipation des femmes et la lutte de libération de l'Afrique*, 38 of *Les première et deuxième déclarations de la Havane,* and 37 of *Nous sommes les héritiers des révolutions du monde*.

Supporters found the success of earlier sales of *Thomas Sankara Speaks*—490 of which had been sold in France as of June 28—gave Pathfinder a significant boost with the latest titles. Many stores that initially ordered *Thomas Sankara Speaks* have since re-ordered it, sometimes several times.

THE MILITANT

Behind the myth of 'natural' disasters

The consequences for workers and farmers of the recent floods in the Midwest were made far worse because of government indifference and the profit-driven nature of capitalist development. Read more in the 'Militant.'

Flooded-out working-class neighborhood in Des Moines in June.

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Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the Militant's views. These are expressed in editorials.

Flood cleanup workers fight job agency rip-off

BY HELEN MEYERS

DES MOINES, Iowa—Hundreds of workers hired by a temporary agency here for flood cleanup in Cedar Rapids, 115 miles away, were left stranded with no pay at the end of their assignment. In response a number of the workers assembled in Des Moines at the agency's parking lot to demand their promised pay. The company locked the doors and called the police to break up the crowd.

Workers who were to be paid on a daily basis did not receive the promised wage amount or per diem for food. Others were packed into motel rooms and in some cases left in Cedar Rapids with no transportation.

Mary Butler and her sister, Sheri Sawyer, were hired by the Command Center temporary agency June 16. In an interview, Butler said that they were sent out to recruit workers, including passing out flyers. "The flyer said the workers would be paid $8 to $12 per hour and could make up to $1,000 per week with overtime," she said. The pay was to be received daily through a card similar to a debit card.

But when workers went to get their pay, the cards had only a small amount of money on it or often a zero balance. Some complained to Command Center management, and were told, "Call the 800 number on the back of the card." When workers eventually got their pay it was only $7 an hour.

Butler said that workers continued to report to work because "they wanted their pay and they needed the jobs." Butler, who was told she would receive $10 per hour, also initially got paid $7 per hour.

Conditions on the job were very dangerous, Butler said. Workers were forced to go into narrow crawl spaces and tunnels with only a dust mask for protection. Several became ill and when they protested the bosses said, "Either go back in there or you are fired."

Command Center hired a Spanish-language interpreter to sign up workers. When Butler's sister Sheri, who speaks Spanish, heard the interpreter telling workers they would get $10 per hour, she intervened and said in Spanish, "Don't lie to these people. Tell them straight up what they will be paid." At that point one of the bosses promised $8 per hour. Most of the workers actually got $7.

Butler said she received one phone call from a worker reporting that 17 Command Center employees were housed in one motel room. They were sleeping in shifts. Because the company did not pay its motel bills, workers were forced on short notice to move to new locations.

On June 30, Butler and Sawyer were fired and told the office was "cleaning up." By the next day, the office was vacated and there was a sign on the door giving a phone number for questions.

Butler like many others is fighting to get her pay and has filed complaints with the state. "The workers took pride in doing a good deed in helping with the flood cleanup," she said.

Debris in downtown Cedar Rapids, Iowa, June 18. Cleanup workers are demanding pay that was promised them by Command Center temporary agency.

Maryland jail death sparks anger

BY TIM MAILHOT

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Workers in the Washington area expressed outrage at the death of Ronnie White, a 19-year-old Black youth who died in custody at a jail in Prince Georges County, Maryland.

White was arrested June 27 and accused of murder in the death of county cop Richard Findley. White allegedly ran over Findley in a truck with stolen tags. Another cop with Findley at the time is the only one to identify White as the driver.

At the jail White was examined and found in good health. He was placed in a maximum security cell and checked on every half-hour. During a check the morning of June 28 White was seen by guards sitting at the side of his bunk alert, according to the *Washington Post*. But just 20 minutes later he was found on the floor against the bunk and "unresponsive." He was taken to a hospital and pronounced dead. Two days later, a state medical examiner ruled that White's death was a homicide caused by asphyxiation and strangulation.

More than two dozen protesters gathered outside Prince George's County July 4 to protest White's killing. Speakers included Dorothy Elliot, whose son was killed while in police custody in 1993.

"Of course the cops did it," said Lynette Kinlaw, a floor worker at Linens of the Week, an industrial laundry plant organized by UNITE-HERE. "They are the only ones who had access to him."

"Murder is murder. Cops have no right to be judge, jury and executioner," added another floor worker, Joyce McKnight

"What they did was taking revenge—that was a hit," said Trent Smith, a trimmer at AM Briggs meat provisioning plant.

"They did this to send a message," said trimmer Mike Harris. "If you kill one of us we will kill you."

"They killed him and now they're trying to cover it up," said Marion Gary, a packer in the same plant.

Gary, who grew up in Prince Georges County, described how cops chased and beat him when he was 13 years old for playing in an abandoned house.

"Those responsible should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law," said Seth Dellinger, a band saw operator in the plant. Dellinger is the Socialist Workers candidate for D.C. Delegate to the House of Representatives.

At a July 2 press conference the Prince Georges County NAACP demanded that the county cops who had access to White in the jail be suspended until a thorough investigation has been completed.

Prince Georges County cops removed most of the forensic evidence from White's cell before state police took over the investigation. Several prison guards have refused to cooperate with the investigation.

Seth Dellinger and Glova Scott contributed to this article.

'Militant' July publishing schedule

The *Militant* will not publish next week. Publication will resume with issue number 30, which will be mailed out on Thursday, July 24.

Shorten workweek, says socialist

Continued from front page

pay, to spread the available work to all and reduce the competition between workers that the employers use to divide us," the socialist said. He will end the rigging of unemployment statistics by the government to mask the true number of workers without jobs or working part-time jobs because they cannot find full-time ones.

"Those who are targets of discrimination—Blacks, Latinos, women—are always the first to be laid off," Calero said. "As president I will fight to strengthen and extend affirmative action programs."

The socialist candidate said these measures to protect workers from unemployment will be combined with regular cost-of-living increases in all wages and benefits and an increase in the federal minimum wage to protect working people from the ravages of inflation.

"In this struggle the workers are up against the entire capitalist class and its government. We're not going to win by just fighting them plant by plant. We have to also take them on in the political arena," Calero explained. "The working class needs our own political party, a labor party based on a fighting union movement." He said such a party would contest the Democrats, Republicans, and other capitalist parties in the elections and it will mobilize working people by the millions to defend their own interests.

438,000 jobs lost since January

Continued from front page

Despite this, the official unemployment rate remained at 5.5 percent. Official unemployment statistics do not include workers who are employed only part-time. Other large sections of the working class, including those who have stopped looking for work, are also excluded in the official statistics.

The major auto companies said they will lay off at least 25,000 workers this summer and fall from more than 15 assembly plants nationwide. General Motors will lay off 11,000 employees, some for weeks and some for months. Ford will lay off some 5,000 and Chrysler, about 9,500.

Since 2006, GM, Ford, and Chrysler have cut more than 100,000 jobs through contract buyouts and other special retirement programs.

The airlines bosses also continue to slash jobs. Delta Airlines will get rid of 4,000 jobs. Continental is cutting 3,000 workers. American Airlines says it will cut 900 flight attendant jobs and also reduce the number of pilots and mechanics it employs.

Part-time work has surged over the past year. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the category it terms "working part time, but want full-time work" has risen more than 25 percent since June 2007 to 5.4 million.

Today 18 percent of teenagers age 16 to 19 are officially unemployed, two percent higher than one year ago.

New International no. 12

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Capitalism's Long Hot Winter Has Begun
by Jack Barnes

Their Transformation and Ours
SWP Draft Resolution

Crisis, Boom, and Revolution
reports by V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky

—$16

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ON THE PICKET LINE

UK local gov't workers set to strike over pay

LONDON—Local government workers in the United Kingdom voted to go on strike July 16–17 after they were offered a mere 2.45 percent a year pay raise. Almost 600,000 workers who belong to the UNISON union cast a ballot, including school dinner staff, classroom assistants, council offices, refuse collectors, and librarians.

UNISON reports that 250,000 council workers, most of them women, earn less than £6.50 an hour (about US $12). The union is demanding a 6 percent pay rise or 50 pence an hour, whichever is higher. Inflation is already at 4.3 percent.

An April report by the London *Times* listed some of the realities facing working people over the last year: a 21.7 percent increase on a liter of unleaded petrol; 6 percent increase on a weekly food shop; 17.6 percent increase in the cost of milk, cheese, and eggs; and a 15 percent energy increase.

—Celia Pugh

Locked-out unionists raise safety concerns

MONTREAL—A petition raising safety concerns about the operation of the Petro-Canada refinery in Montreal was presented to city council June 16 by a delegation representing 260 locked-out workers. They are members of Local 175 of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada.

The petition, signed by 5,131 people who live in the area, demands that the government ensure regular inspections are carried out and verify the competence of those who are operating the refinery.

Since the beginning of the Nov. 17, 2007 lockout, the company has been operating the refinery using management and strikebreakers, despite several rulings that the use of strikebreakers violates the Labor Code.

—Joe Young

Boston food workers in strike against Aramark

BOSTON—Some 350 food service workers struck Aramark Corporation at the two convention centers here June 21–23. UNITE/HERE Local 26 called the three day-walkout to publicize charges filed with the National Labor Relations Board and a boycott of Aramark.

The union has been without a contract since last October. The company has fired three union activists, including two negotiating committee members, for their union activity; threatened to fire employees for talking about the union while at work; ripped union literature out of the hands of workers; and threatened to take away benefits for raising workplace issues.

On June 23 more than 300 workers and their supporters rallied in front of the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center.

Daryl Singletary, a food service worker on strike, said, "For all the managers looking out the windows, or hiding out around corners, we are not afraid of you! We have union power!"

—Ted Leonard and Laura Garza

Colorado crane collapse injures ironworker

DENVER, Colorado—A June 17 crane collapse at the construction site of Viceroy Resort Residences in Snowmass, Colorado, injured an ironworker who fell 6 to 8 feet from a crossbeam. The media reported the worker, who was hospitalized, was wearing a safety harness.

The collapse occurred as the crane, which is capable of lifting up to 45,000 pounds, collapsed while lifting a pot of waterproofing tar that weighed nearly 10,000 pounds.

For two days the 140 workers at the site were laid off while the Occupational Safety and Health Agency (OSHA) conducted an investigation. An official cause of the accident has yet to be determined as OSHA has up to six months to issue a report on the case.

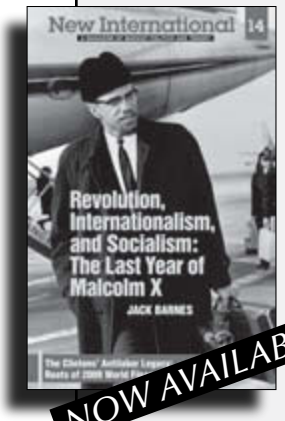
— John Banister

New International

A magazine of Marxist politics and theory

Issue no. 14

- **Revolution, Internationalism, and Socialism: The Last Year of Malcolm X**
- **The Clintons' Antilabor Legacy: Roots of the 2008 World Financial Crisis**
- **The Stewardship of Nature Also Falls to the Working Class**
- **Setting the Record Straight on Fascism and World War II**



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Somalis framed-up by Swedish gov't released

BY DAG TIRSÉN

STOCKHOLM—"Without the mobilizations to defend us, we would not be here today," Yassin Muhammed Ali told a jubilant crowd of more than 200 people at the Rinkeby school.

The June 14 meeting, called by the Somali Peace and Development Organization, celebrated the release of Yassin Muhammed Ali, 42, and Omar Muhammed Ali, 38, who had been detained on frame-up "terrorist" charges and kept in solitary confinement for almost four months.

Militant/Dag Tirsén

Taxi driver Omar Muhammed Ali, above, was detained on frame-up "terrorist" charges.

The day after the celebration, at the travel agency that he runs, Yassin talked to this reporter about how in the early morning hours of February 28, about a dozen cops from the national security squad of the Swedish police raided his home.

Omar joined in the discussion until he had to run to his job as a taxi driver. He told a similar story: the cops broke into his apartment, waking up his five small children before entering his bedroom. "They even refused to let my wife get dressed and cover her hair, an important thing in our religion," he said.

The arrest of Yassin and Omar was part of a broad sweep against Somalis in Sweden. Somali *hawalas* (money transferring agencies), and other Somali businesses had their finances scrutinized by the government.

Yassin said that during the interrogations of himself and Omar, "the police were not interested in what terrorist activity we supposedly were supporting; instead they wanted information about other Somalis and what clan they belonged to. . . . They want to use that information to divide us. We instead want to downplay it. I, for example, don't know what clan Omar belongs to."

Seven child-care centers in Stockholm serving Somalis were closed in early March. The security police claimed the centers might be used to finance "terrorism."

This arbitrary act was immediately met by a protest meeting of 400 people that started an intensive campaign to organize large defense meetings against the frame-ups. Charta 2008, a civil rights committee, was also formed to reach out.

Omar and Yassin were released June 11, and another detained Somali in Oslo a few days earlier. Also released was Ali Berzengi, a Kurd from Iraq also framed up on "terrorism" charges.

Filip Tedelund contributed to this article.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO

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THE MILITANT
A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY/PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

July 22, 1983

On June 21, seven coal miners were killed and three injured in an explosion at McClure No. 1 mine in Dickenson County, Virginia. McClure No. 1, which is owned by Clinchfield Coal Co., had a reputation as a "hot mine," that is, one that gave off a lot of highly flammable methane gas.

And it was known for its owners' flagrant violations of mine safety laws.

An article in the July 4 *Washington Post* titled "Federal Officials Warned by UMW Before Virginia Coal Mine Disaster" traced the efforts by the union to get the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) to force Clinchfield to obey mine safety regulations—to no avail.

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July 21, 1958

The rose-tinted glasses through which President Eisenhower's top advisors view the economic situation were focused this week on "upturns" and on optimism. While the capitalist politicians maneuver for votes, the working people face continued unemployment, short workweeks and rising prices.

The July 8 official report on unemployment shows a rise to 5,437,000—highest unemployment since 1941. But even these gloomy figures have been presented in an "optimistic" light. Economists had predicted six million unemployed where-as there are "only" 5 1/2 million! In addition to the 5 1/2 million officially jobless, there are millions partially employed.

THE MILITANT
Weekly Organ of the Communist League of America [Opposition]

July 22, 1933

The fierce attack upon the living standard of the workers, which the American capitalists are making under the cover of Roosevelt's Industrial Recovery Act, becomes more openly vicious with each new code.

In the code, "minimum" hourly wages range from 25 to 40 cents for different territories. Assuming workers are employed a full 40 hours a week, this means wages from 10 to 16 dollars a week. Since the dollar is down 25 percent and more on the international exchange and prices are skyrocketing, these wages at present really are worth from $7.50 to $12, and when inflation really gets underway they will amount to even less. The steel workers shall not have a standard of living; they shall have a standard of starvation.

EDITORIAL

U.S. troops out of Afghanistan

The U.S. military is stepping up the tempo of combat operations in its "global war on terror" in Pakistan's border regions and in Afghanistan. In March an additional 3,200 U.S. marines were dispatched to Afghanistan. The Pentagon has said even more will be sent by 2009. Washington is pressing its imperialist allies to do the same, with some success.

Washington has increased bombing strikes from fighter jets and Predator drones in Pakistan's border regions. It has stepped up coordinated actions against Taliban-backed militias as well. These actions have drawn Islamabad more deeply into the fighting and shattered its attempt to negotiate "peace agreements" with Taliban supporters. Some of Pakistan's rulers see such agreements as necessary to maintain stability along its border where opposition to its collaboration with U.S. imperialism is high.

The U.S. rulers are ratcheting up the war in Afghanistan and Pakistan with little opposition. This bipartisan course has the enthusiastic backing of the Democrats and Republicans.

Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama says, "It's time to refocus our attention on the war we have to win in Afghanistan. It's time to go after the al-Qaeda leadership where it actually exists."

But there is no "we" in this war. U.S. workers and farmers have no interest in pursuing the imperialist aggression begun in Afghanistan in 2001 to remove a regime that was unwilling to do Washington's bidding. Nor do we have any interest in the continued occupation of Iraq by U.S. and "coalition" forces.

Republican John McCain argues that Iraq is the "central front" in the "war on terrorism" and says NATO countries, plus the Afghani and Pakistani military, should do more of the fighting in Afghanistan until Washington can free up more troops from Iraq.

Working people in this country need to demand the immediate unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. and other forces in Afghanistan and Iraq. Not one person, not one penny for Washington's wars!

Blow dealt to Fla. law on Cuba travel

BY DEBORAH LIATOS

MIAMI—U.S. District Judge Alan S. Gold temporarily lifted a measure signed into law by Governor Charlie Crist on June 23 requiring travel agencies specializing in trips to Cuba to post a $250,000 bond with the state and pay up to $2,500 in annual fees.

On July 1, the judge allowed flights to continue while he considers travel agents' arguments over whether they should be regulated by the state of Florida. The two sides will return to court July 11 for another hearing on the validity of the law, which was set to kick in July 1.

Attorney Ira Kurzban, whose firm is representing the travel agencies, called the ruling a victory against "an illegal and unconstitutional law designed to punish Cuban-American businesses and those wishing to travel to Cuba."

A lawsuit was filed by 16 Miami-Dade based travel agencies against the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs. It charges that the heightened requirements unfairly target agencies arranging trips to Cuba. Under the law, Florida agencies handling trips to Cuba or any other country Washington deems "terrorist" must pay the additional fees and bond. There are no direct flights from Florida to the other nations on the federal list—North Korea, Sudan, Syria, and Iran.

The 16 agencies handled trips for about 100,000 people traveling to Cuba last year, according to Tessie Aral, president of ABC Charters Travel. Under current rules the agencies must report their business transactions to the U.S. Office of Foreign Asset Control and are regulated by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

"What this bill is trying to do is essentially stop travel from Miami to Cuba," said Armando García, president of Marazul Charters Travel.

The lawsuit states that the Florida measure violates the U.S. constitution on six grounds, including denying the travel agencies equal protection by "singling out Cuban-American business owners."

Correction

In the article "Vigil protests undercover cop killing of Houston man" in the July 7 issue, anti-police brutality activist Cynthia Pharms' name was misspelled as Cynthia Barnes.

LETTERS

Solitary confinement

From May 30 until June 1 at Temple University in Philadelphia, I attended a conference on ending solitary confinement for inmates in prisons. Some inmates are kept in solitary confinement for a year or more, former inmates testified. Also mentioned were people in prison who are framed up and simply there for their politics.

Although not mentioned at the conference, the prison population doubled mostly during the "liberal" administration of William Clinton.

Charles Wolfsfeld
Philadelphia, PA

Leonard Peltier

First, Leonard and I want to thank you for the outpouring of support. Please continue to urge prison authorities to provide Leonard with a test kit so that he can control his diabetes. We also want Leonard to receive diabetic shoes to help with his diabetes-related foot problems.

In the last several days, Leonard has finally been able to see a doctor. However, the diabetes testing kit remains an issue.

Citing security reasons, U.S. Penitentiary-Lewisburg will not allow Leonard to have a testing kit in his cell. But Leonard is not asking to have a kit in his cell. We're asking that Leonard be allowed to have his own kit at the pharmacy for accurate readings, as well as easy and regular access.

Often, there are no medical personnel to help him at the infirmary and the "general kit" which is used by other prisoners could give false readings. With his personal kit he will be able to test himself three or four times a day and hopefully achieve a balanced blood glucose level.

All supporters are requested to continue to contact: Warden Bledsoe, USP Lewisburg, US Penitentiary, 2400 Robert F. Miller Drive, Lewisburg, PA 17837. Phone: 570-523-1251, Fax: 570-522-7745, E-mail: lew/execassistant@bop.gov.

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'Militant' Prisoners' Fund

The Prisoners' Fund makes it possible to send prisoners reduced rate subscriptions. To donate, send a check or money order payable to the Militant and earmarked "Prisoners' Fund" to 306 W. 37th St., 10th Floor, New York, NY 10018.

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

Meat industry

Continued from front page

into safety practices at IBP in the late 1980s. The results showed how brazen the bosses had become. The company kept two separate sets of records. Those given to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration contained less than 10 percent of the injuries reported by the company's own medical staff in another set of records. Under public pressure, OSHA fined IBP a few million dollars.

The injury rate peaked a few years later in 1991. Over the next 10 years the rate of reported injuries was cut in half.

Since 1991 line speed and work hours have continued to increase. The unions have also continued to weaken, making it easier for the bosses to underreport injuries. The bosses and government agencies, who have a vested interest in keeping these figures as low as possible, have done just that.

Since government statistics rely on company reports, many injuries go unreported. A 2004 study in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* estimated as many as 69 percent of workplace injuries across industrial sectors never make it into government reports.

Reported injuries and lost work time for injured workers cost bosses money in higher insurance premiums and lost production. Many major meatpacking companies, such as IBP, Excel, and ConAgra, are self-insured, giving them added incentive to hide and dispute injuries. Some companies enforce underreporting as policy by tying bonuses of supervisors and foremen to injury rates.

In 1981 nearly half of all injuries and job-related illnesses resulted in days away from work. By 2001 this figure was less than 10 percent.

Companies became more tenacious and effective in challenging injury claims. UFCW researchers in 2003 and 2004 interviewed 63 workers injured on the job at the massive Smithfield Foods plant in Tar Heel, North Carolina. Only 24 percent of these workers received workers' compensation for their treatment and just over half showed up on government report logs. Hurt workers at many plants are often fired or pressured to quit.

The most dramatic drop in the injury rate in meatpacking occurred between 2000 and 2002, when the injury and illness rate dropped nearly 40 percent.

In 2002, OSHA enacted new rules for calculating injury statistics, which caused an immediate drop in the figures. The new recording procedures also opened up more ways for companies to underreport injuries.

The new procedures created, in the words of OSHA, "maximum flexibility" in the reporting of injuries "so employers can keep all the information on computers." The term "light duty" was redefined to apply to employees who only work partial days or are unable to perform "routine job functions."

The following injuries were no longer counted: Re-injury of a preexisting injury, unless it is determined that a "significant degree of aggravation" has occurred; injuries requiring only "first aid"; and injuries not resulting in any days off work beyond the day of the incident.

Pakistan war

Continued from front page

In a related development, the German government announced that it would increase the number of its troops in Afghanistan by 1,000 by this fall. German Defense Ministry officials said that would bring its total force in Afghanistan to 4,500.

U.S. Gen. James Mattis, in charge of NATO modernization, said he hoped that Berlin's decision would result in other countries increasing their troop levels. The U.S. government has been pressing its NATO allies to commit more troops to the fighting.

There are about 53,000 NATO troops in Afghanistan, about 23,500 of which are U.S. troops, according to NATO. At least 9,500 U.S. troops fight in Afghanistan under a separate U.S. command. Congress reported in April that the combined U.S. force in Afghanistan under NATO and U.S. command was 33,000.

Nelson Mandela on battle to end South Africa apartheid

Below is an excerpt from The Struggle Is My Life*, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month. It is a collection of Nelson Mandela's speeches and political writings from his days as a leader of the African National Congress Youth League in 1944 until his release from prison in 1990. The selection reprinted here is from a statement released by Mandela in 1961 in the midst of the struggle against the apartheid regime of South Africa. Copyright © 1990, Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.*

BY NELSON MANDELA

The magnificent response to the call of the National Action Council for a three-day strike and the wonderful work done by our organisers and field workers throughout the country proves once again that no power on earth can stop an oppressed people determined to win their freedom. In the face of unprecedented intimidation by the government and employers and of blatant falsehoods and distortions by the press, immediately before and during the strike, the freedom-loving people of South Africa gave massive and solid support to the historic and challenging resolutions of the Pietermaritzburg Conference. Factory and office workers, businessmen in town and country, students in university colleges, in primary and secondary schools, inspired by genuine patriotism and threatened with loss of employment, cancellation of business licenses and the ruin of school careers, rose to the occasion and recorded in emphatic tones their opposition to a White republic forcibly imposed on us by a minority. In the light of the formidable array of hostile forces that stood against us, and the difficult and dangerous conditions under which we worked, the results were most inspiring. I am confident that if we work harder and more systematically, the Nationalist government will not survive for long. No organisation in the world could have withstood and survived the full-scale and massive bombardment directed against us by the government during the last month. . . .

A rally in South Africa during the defiance campaign against apartheid in the 1950s

At the present moment it is sufficient to say that we plan to make government impossible. Those who are voteless cannot be expected to continue paying taxes to a government which is not responsible to them. People who live in poverty and starvation cannot be expected to pay exorbitant house rents to the government and local authorities. We furnish the sinews of agriculture and industry. We produce the work of the gold mines, the diamonds and the coal, of the farms and industry, in return for miserable wages. Why should we continue enriching those who steal the products of our sweat and blood? Those who exploit us and refuse us the right to organise trade unions? Those who side with the government when we stage peaceful demonstrations to assert our claims and aspirations? How can Africans serve on School Boards and Committees which are part of Bantu Education, a sinister scheme of the Nationalist government to deprive the African people of real education in return for tribal education? Can Africans be expected to be content with serving on Advisory Boards and Bantu Authorities when the demand all over the continent of Africa is for national independence and self-government? Is it not an affront to the African people that the government should now seek to extend Bantu Authorities to the cities, when people in the rural areas have refused to accept the same system and fought against it tooth and nail? Which African does not burn with indignation when thousands of our people are sent to gaol every month under the cruel pass laws? Why should we continue carrying these badges of slavery? Non-collaboration is a dynamic weapon. We must refuse. We must use it to send this government to the grave. It must be used vigorously and without delay. The entire resources of the Black people must be mobilised to withdraw co-operation with the Nationalist government. Various forms of industrial and economic action will be employed to undermine the already tottering economy of the country. We will call upon the international bodies to expel South Africa and upon nations of the world to sever economic and diplomatic relations with the country.

I am informed that a warrant for my arrest has been issued, and that the police are looking for me. The National Action Council has given full and serious consideration to this question, and has sought the advice of many trusted friends and bodies and they have advised me not to surrender myself. I have accepted this advice, and will not give myself up to a government I do not recognise. Any serious politician will realise that under present-day conditions in this country, to seek for cheap martyrdom by handing myself to the police is naive and criminal. We have an important programme before us and it is important to carry it out very seriously and without delay.

I have chosen this latter course, which is more difficult and which entails more risk and hardship than sitting in gaol. I have had to separate myself from my dear wife and children, from my mother and sisters, to live as an outlaw in my own land. I have had to close my business, to abandon my profession, and live in poverty and misery, as many of my people are doing. I will continue to act as the spokesman of the National Action Council during the phase that is unfolding and in the tough struggles that lie ahead. I shall fight the government side by side with you, inch by inch, and mile by mile, until victory is won. What are you going to do? Will you come along with us, or are you going to co-operate with the government in its efforts to suppress the claims and aspirations of your own people? Or are you going to remain silent and neutral in a matter of life and death to my people, to our people? For my own part I have made my choice. I will not leave South Africa, nor will I surrender.

Only through hardship, sacrifice and militant action can freedom be won. The struggle is my life. I will continue fighting for freedom until the end of my days.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

July BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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